

Jonathan Hager House  
Hagerstown, Maryland

HABS No. MD-39

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*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District of Maryland

Historic American Buildings Survey  
John H. Sears, District Officer  
Hydes, Maryland

THE JONATHAN HAGER HOUSE  
Hagerstown, Washington County, Maryland.

Owner: The Washington County Historical Society,  
Hagerstown, Maryland.

Date of Erection: Circa 1740.

Architect: Unknown.

Builder: Jonathan Hager, founder of Hagerstown, Maryland.

Present Condition: Restored; building largely original.

Number of Stories: Two and one-half above cellar, which is banked  
on one side.

Materials of Construction:

Exterior walls - small fieldstones removed from the surrounding  
natural limestone out-cropping.

Interior walls - mud-and-rye-straw plaster over 1 by 4 inch oak  
strips laid horizontally an approximate 2 inches apart.

Chimney - brick, capped, and emerging in a near-central position  
in the roof-line. Originates in a limestone hearth  
and flue on the ground-floor level.

Roof - now covered with Williamsburg-type tiles, in imitation of  
the wooden shingles which the house appears to have  
once had.

Floors - ground floor, flagstone; remainder of floors largely  
early replacements in pine, oak and walnut random-  
width boards.

Historical Data:

The historical record of this early frontier house-  
fort, situated within the limits of present-day Hagerstown, Mary-  
land (junction of Route No. 40 and Route No. 11) has been  
assembled from

- a) Family records of both Hager and Rohrer descendants:  
Mrs. Robert F. Brent, Baltimore, Maryland; Mr. William  
Wingert and Mr. Miller Wingert, (deceased) Hagerstown,  
Maryland; Professor Frank L. Hager, Fayette, Missouri;  
Mrs. Henry C. Foster, (deceased), Hagerstown, Maryland.

- b) Land records and other data. (Land Office and Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland; researchers, Dr. Arthur G. Tracey, William B. Marye, Mary V. Mish. Court House records of Washington County and Frederick County, Maryland, and of Frederick County Virginia; researcher, Mary V. Mish. See appended paper, Maryland Historical Society).
- c) Graveyards of Washington County, Maryland.
- d) Archaeological work undertaken under and around the Hager House by Mary V. Mish and Dr. Henry Chandlee Forman, 1952-1953.
- e) Known published sources (See Maryland Historical Society Report by Foster and Marye).
- f) Early photographs and a watercolor in possession of the Washington County Historical Society; oil painting, private ownership.
- g) Architectural evaluation as made by accredited architects and antiquarians, i.e., Ned J. Burns, Charles M. Stotz, Francis H. Jencks, Sanger Attwill, J. Gilman D'Arcy Paul, Dr. J. Hall Pleasants, John H. Scarff, Frederick L. Rath, Jr., Dr. J. Walter Coleman, Dr. Henry Chandlee Forman, Mr. James W. Foster.
- h) Checks made on original surveys by J. B. Ferguson & Company, Hagerstown, Maryland; by County Surveyor J. H. Seibert (Washington County, Maryland); by the City of Hagerstown, Maryland; by Dr. Arthur G. Tracey, Hampstead, Maryland, from original surveys and descriptions as found in the Land Office, Annapolis, Maryland.

#### Resumé of history -

Jonathan Hager's original stone house on "Hager's Fancy" was built upon the site of a "sorry" house in which he resided in June, 1739, when he took up his warrant for 200 acres. (Patented Certificate No. 1013, Prince George's County, Land Office, Annapolis; Patents EI, No. 6, f. 203-4). As contemporary accounts and records indicate that he made his selection of land in Western Maryland "to give encouragement to traders, and to erect proper habitations for the stowage of goods for the supply of the adjacent country ....", and that he engaged in the fur-trade, "Hager's Fancy" may be considered to be one of the few remaining storehouses of frontier America. (William Eddis, Letters from America: London, 1792, p.133; Frederick County,

Virginia, Clerk's Fees of James Wood, 1744). Built over two springs, it survived the depredations of the French & Indian War (1755-1763) and for this reason, as well as because of its sturdy construction, may likewise be regarded as a house-fort of the period.

Jonathan Hager sold his home with increased acreage to Jacob Rohrer in 1745 (Land Office, Annapolis, Md., Deed Book TI, No. 1, f. 447). Rohrer and their descendants, the Hammonds, possessed this property until 1944, when the house and an approximate ten acres were sold by them, under name of the West End Improvement Company, to the Washington County Historical Society.


#### Architectural Description:

The Jonathan Hager House, built of fieldstone, is a rectangular dwelling, measuring 30' 6" by 34' 10", exclusive of the porch foundation. The latter projects slightly over 4' beyond the end walls. The comb roof is broken in the near-center by a brick chimney. (On the Maryland-Pennsylvania frontier central chimneys are a characteristic of German construction). Although the three exterior door-frames and two of the window-frames are of early construction, made of heavy timbers, wooden pinned, it is evident that two of the door-frames and both window-frames were changed or modified at some early date. Of particular interest are the two large springs in the cellar, and the large fireplace in one of these springrooms. Jacobean influence in the downstairs and upstairs hall paneling, and the silhouetted baluster at the head of the stairs are unique for Western Maryland. Quarrells and calmes found under the front porch and off the west wall might indicate that this house, as well as the "sorry" house of an earlier date, may once have had leaded casements with diamond-shaped panes. The heavy timbers of the attic, floorboards and paneling which follow the tapering tree-shape, and the heavily-paneled, walnut "Dutch" (or two-leaved) basement door are features which tend to sustain both the character and the early date of building of the Jonathan Hager House.

#### Bibliography:

See appended report, Maryland Historical Society.

Search of title made in Land and Probate records of Washington and Frederick Counties, Maryland, and in the Land Office and Hall of Records, Annapolis, Maryland, by Dr. A. G. Tracey, William B. Marye and Mary V. Mish.

  
(Mrs. Frank W. Mish, Jr.)

Chairman, Jonathan Hager House Restoration

December 8, 1953.

## Washington County Historical Society



P. O. BOX 436

HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

JONATHAN HAGER HOUSE RESTORATION (1953)

The artifacts depicted within the following five photographs were found by me during the months of April and May, 1952, beneath the porch of the Jonathan Hager House, Hagerstown, Maryland. Two exceptions, so designated in Photograph #1, were discovered by Dr. Henry Chandlee Forman, February 1953, off the West Wall. Exceptions are likewise listed in Photograph #4.

These articles have in some instances been identified by authoritative sources; some have been locally identified.

In order to reclaim these articles it was necessary to sift a dirt fill which had a depth of an approximate 58". An entrance to the under-porch area had been sealed with dry-laid stone not later than, apparently, 1850. Natural drainage and the protection offered by the porch had tended to preserve all of the findings from the damage normally incurred by exposure to the elements.

Small articles, such as buttons and pre-Revolutionary coins, were found on the surface of the fill, indicating, perhaps, that they had fallen through the cracks in the board flooring of the porch.

MARY VERNON MISH

(Mrs. Frank W. Mish, Jr.)

Chairman, Jonathan Hager House Restoration

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(copy)

Office of CHARLES M. & EDWARD STOTZ  
Registered Architect and Engineer  
PITTSBURGH, PA.

December 16 1949

COMMENTS ON THE JONATHAN HAGER HOUSE, HAGERSTOWN  
(From visit of December 14 1949)

Judging by a general knowledge of early American architecture from travels and books and by a specific knowledge of early architecture in western Pennsylvania from detailed first-hand examination, research, writing and restoration work, I would say that the stone house on land once owned by Jonathan Hager was a typical simple stone house of the Appalachian frontier, particularly of the Pennsylvania-Maryland region. Such a house could have been built in western Pennsylvania as late as 1820 but not earlier than 1763 because of then existing Indian troubles and a British prohibition against settlement. I do not know enough about the history of Maryland to make a similar statement for that region but there is nothing in architectural history to preclude the construction of a house of this character as early as 1730. The construction of even a simple house of stone in those days indicated a relative freedom from frontier raids and an intention of permanent residence by an owner of relatively good circumstances.

The signature stone in the gable wall of this house is now missing. It would constitute the most reliable evidence of ownership and, likely, the date of completion. This inscription may of

course have related only to the second story addition. Dozens of such stones were photographed in the Western Pennsylvania Architectural Survey and many published in the book "The Early Architecture of Western Pennsylvania" which resulted from that survey. These stones usually proclaimed the name or initials of the owner, sometimes his wife's also, the date of construction and, occasionally, additional data.

From overwhelming evidence of precedent it is unlikely that the original one-story house had a porch. Settlers of that time would have considered this an unnecessary luxury if they considered it at all. Porches were usually added in later more settled and secure times when life afforded some degree of leisure. However, the nature of the timbers in the roof of the porch would indicate a fairly early date of at least a hundred years ago. It is possible that this porch was added when the second story was added.

The two windows under the porch have the characteristic wide exposed window frames, as does the entrance door also. It is curious that the other first floor windows do not have a similar frame. This would indicate that these windows were either altered at a later time or had been added. Further comment is made on this point later in the report.

The room to the left, upon entering, contains a large fireplace that was uncovered during this visit. A chairrail of apparent age extended across this opening which would indicate that it had been plastered over at an early date. This room has deep wood lined

window jambs and so does the room over it, but they are not to be found in the rest of the house. It is therefore likely that this embellishment and the plastering of the fireplace was done when the second floor was added. The simple, quarter-round molding of the door to the left of this fireplace may have been the original casing and would indicate that the first one-story house was of simpler character.

The partition on the second floor that we opened is of early type, composed of 1 by 4 inch oak strip laid horizontally about 2 inches apart, the space filled with straw and 2 inches of straw reinforced clay plaster applied on each side. To apply a small frame of clear glass over this area would make an interesting exhibit. Before the availability of good lime for plaster such plaster was the rule; we restored a building constructed in 1824 which had a similar plaster of only slightly more refined character.

The construction of a house over a spring was not a rarity even in the early part of the nineteenth century. Where topography was favorable, and this was usually not the case at the source of a spring, the owner was thus provided with the equivalent of a modern refrigerator and was spared trips to the springhouse in bad or unseasonable weather. There was usually enough ventilation in the cellar construction, if it were not intentionally supplied, to eliminate excessive dampness or mildew. It is therefore not necessary to assume that the house was built over a spring with an eye



to withstanding a siege from Indians. Nor does the so-called loophole or splayed jamb opening in the inner partition of stone indicate any intention of defense against Indians. If it were used for this purpose it would imply that the house was built in two periods, horizontally as well as vertically. An examination of the stone wall of the first floor does not show any evidence of two building operations. Furthermore the inner stone cellar partition does not appear to be bonded to the outside walls as would have been the case if one portion was built first. In fact, it is possible to see all the way through from one basement to the other at one point in the rear where the inner wall abuts the outer.

Another evidence of considerable age in the second floor addition is the character of the roof timbers. Two of the rafters are over-sized and support, at the center of their span from eave to ridge, large purlin members to which they are joined by mortise and tenon with wood pegs. This reduced the strain on the smaller rafters by providing a support at their centers. The wood sheathing, consisting of horizontal strips placed slightly apart appear to have been replaced but are characteristic. The wood shingles that may be seen above them, that lie under the paper roof, are probably the third or fourth replacement. The original shingles were likely oak shakes, 2 to 4 feet long. These could be readily reproduced today.

The walls of the building are of limestone, of a poor character, obviously taken from the local outcrop of which there is considerable on the site. This stone is stubborn in the hands of a mason, splitting unpredictably and difficult to work to a true edge. As a result there are irregular voids around the windows that were filled with flat stones laid off their natural bed and caulked with the poor mortar of the times. Many of these stones have fallen out, permitting entrance of air and moisture into the wall and encouraging rapid deterioration.

The window sash do not appear to be original in any instance. It is likely that the original panes were smaller than the present. Glass over 8 by 10 inches was costly and difficult or impossible to obtain. It was usual for subsequent owners to use glass as large as could be obtained to eliminate work in cleaning and to admit more light. It would be interesting to compare the outside dimensions of the sash in the two porch windows with the others to see whether this led to the adoption of the narrow staff moldings when the new sash were applied.

The setting of the Hager House in close proximity to the park and lake and the possibilities of developing the wooded land immediately about it might lead to a most attractive result. The preservation and restoration of this simple, primitive backwoods dwelling, typical of the frontier, is desirable from any point of view. It was from these eastern slopes of the Appalachians that

the hardy, fearless pioneers came who opened and won the West. Our records in western Pennsylvania contain many examples of building constructed by settlers, chiefly English, who came from Maryland and Virginia by way of the Potomac Valley and Wills Creek. Hagerstown had a more direct access to the Susquehanna and Bedford valleys but thousands traveled the route, later to be identified as the National Pike, in the great exodus to the West; three million made this journey between 1800 and 1830. Most of these immigrants embarked on the Monongahela at Brownsville or on the Ohio at Pittsburgh or Wheeling. The headwaters of the Ohio were known as the Gateway to the West and through this area, as through a funnel, poured a vast pilgrimage of people from all parts of the Atlantic seaboard and Europe as well. This brought a greater diversity of people into western Pennsylvania than any other frontier. We have records of many personages, such as Cresap, whose names figure largely in your annals and later moved west. To mention only one of these, Joseph Dorsey constructed near Brownsville in 1787 a stone house with beautifully and elaborately paneled interiors of a design similar to the one he had occupied in Ellicott City, near Baltimore.

These comments are not advanced by one who considers himself an expert in the subject, but by an architect engaged in modern institutional practice who has engaged in antiquarian pursuits, chiefly during the late and famous "depression", as one of the most interesting

hobbies available to architects. We have done some restoration work and believe that there is a great deal more that should be done before all evidence of the handiwork of our ancestors is obliterated. I appreciate this opportunity to look in on your project and earnestly hope that you will carry it to completion as a relic of our rich heritage and an evidence of our early civilization for those to come after us.

"Charles M. Stotz"

copy

J. B. FERGUSON & CO.  
Engineers  
Constructors  
Hagerstown, Maryland.

February 18, 1950

Mrs. Frank W. Mish, Jr.  
Falling Waters  
Virginia

Dear Mrs. Mish:

You have expressed a wish to have the location of what we have been calling the Old Hager House authenticated if possible, so that there need be no reasonable doubt but that it was actually the site of the Jonathan Hager's home in the 1730's.

Something more than 25 years ago, Edward M. Schindel, who was employed in our office as Surveyor, while working with patents in the vicinity of South Hagerstown, came across the description of Hager's Fancy as surveyed for Jonathan Hager in 1739. The first line attracted his attention. This was, "Beginning at a bounded white oak standing on the side of a hill within 50 yards of the said Hager's dwelling house. Mr. Schindel was quite familiar with the environment and the approximate location of the lines of various patents, as we had, at the time, been endeavoring for several years to make a complete patent map of Washington County and were paying especial attention to Hagerstown. It was quite feasible to superimpose these patents on the map of Hagerstown as it was in the 1920's with the result that Mr. Schindel was thoroughly convinced, as were others of us, that the stone house built over springs west of Walnut Lane and north of the Western Maryland & B. & O. connecting track was the house referred to in the patent for Hager's fancy.

At your request, we have dug up some of these old patent maps and have rechecked the plottings of "Hager's Fancy", the Resurvey of Hager's Fancy, "Found It Out" and "Exchange", all of which were patented at various times by Jonathan Hager. We realize that many of those old patents were inaccurately surveyed and described, but from the mass of evidence we have, we are convinced that the point of beginning of Hager's Fancy was within fifty yards of the stone house we are discussing. The evidence is so strong that we do not believe that any to the contrary can ever be produced, and we recommend, therefore, the unhesitating acceptance of the site of this existing old stone house, as unquestionably that of the Founder of Hagerstown.

As we have the time, we are intending to prepare an adequate map which will show these old patents and their relation to the streets of Hagerstown and the site of the Hager House.

Yours very truly,

"John B. Ferguson"

JBF/bm

Hagerstown, Md.  
November 18, 1950

Mrs. F. W. Mish, Jr., Chairman,  
Hagerstown, Md.

Dear Mrs. Mish:

Subject: Hager House at  
City Park.

Confirming our recent conversation concerning the subject House, would advise that in 1944 I reviewed the Land Records for this property and found the following:

(1) It was being carried on the Tax Assessment Books in the name of the West End Improvement Company.

(2) This Company acquired it as parcel No. 1 of the deed from John H. Gassaway and others recorded in Liber No. 96, folio 130, one of the Land Records of Washington County. This parcel is defined as being part of "The Land of Prospect" and is described, in part, as being bounded on the West by the main line of the Cumberland Valley Railroad, on the South by the connection between the Western Maryland and the B. & O. Railroads, and on the East by the Hagerstown Ice Company and a public road, etc. All of the parcels in this deed are defined as being part of the land conveyed by Fred. Rohrer to Michael Hammond by deed dated April 1, 1813 and recorded in Liber Y, folio 687, another of the Land Records of Washington County. This deed from Rohrer to Hammond also refers to several adjoining tracts and mentions that the property was devised to Fred. Rohrer by his father, Jacob Rohrer.

(3) Jacob Rohrer was granted a tract of land called "Land of Prospect" consisting of 592 acres on October 13, 1802, on the basis of a survey by Joseph Sprigg dated May 1, 1790. This survey included portions of several other tracts, one of which was a portion of a tract called "Hager's Fancy".

(4) Prior to the above survey, the tract called "Hager's Fancy", then recorded as "Hagars Fancy", was granted Jonathan

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Hager the 16th. day of December 1739, and the starting point of the tract is defined as follows: - "Beginning at a bounded white oak standing on the side of a hill within 50 yards of the said Hager's dwelling house, and running thence - - -" This starting point for "Hager's Fancy" has been established by my predecessor in Office as being in the area East of the Pennsylvania Railroad and North of Key Street almost opposite the Standard Oil Company property, and reasonably near the subject House.

In view of the above, I am inclined to believe that Jonathan Hager actually owned the subject House on or about the date of the grant for "Hager's Fancy".

I trust this information will be useful to you,

Very truly yours,

"J. H. Seibert"

J. H. Seibert,  
County Surveyor.

JS/s

(Note on Paragraph #2:

Michael Hammond married into the  
Rohrer family. - M.V.M.)

(copy)

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
201 West Monument Street  
Baltimore 1, Maryland

May 21, 1951

Mrs. Frank W. Mish, Jr.  
Falling Waters  
West Virginia

Dear Mrs. Mish:

The enclosed report on the Hager House is the result, as you know, of more than a year of investigation. It is unfortunate that this study has not been rewarded by finding conclusive proof. Mr. Marye and I can only submit a full report of the findings.

The only recommendation for the report is that it has been made after what we believe to be a comprehensive investigation. Our opinion is based on the fullest array of facts that has yet been brought together.

Sincerely yours,

"James W. Foster"

Director

1 Encl  
MSS "Hager House"



## The Stone House Called the "Hager House"

Hagerstown, Maryland

On October 19, 1739, a tract of land containing 200 acres, situated in the valley of Antietam Creek and now within the city limits of Hagerstown, was taken up by Jonathan Hager and called "Hager's Fancy."<sup>1</sup> For this purpose he had purchased from Daniel Dulany part of a common land warrant equal to the amount of land he intended to take up, paying him the sum of £ 44 current money of Maryland.<sup>2</sup> Since there were improvements on the land he had in mind, Hager had obtained from the Provincial Land Office on June 5 of the same year a special warrant, which alone was applicable to unpatented land which had been improved.<sup>3</sup> This warrant described the land as a part of "Long Meadow", on which a certain Evan Shelby has made some improvements and has relinquisht the same to the petitioner.<sup>4</sup>

On the certificate of survey of "Hager's Fancy," the surveyor, Peter Dout, endorsed a list of the aforesaid improvements as follows: "about 3 acres of corn field fenced in and two sorry houses."<sup>5</sup> That Hager was already living on the aforesaid land may be inferred from a phrase in the description of the property in the certificate of survey, which reads: "Beginning at a bounded white oak standing on the side of a hill within 50 yards of the said Hager's dwelling house."

Whether this dwelling house was one of the two sorry houses already standing on this property, it is impossible to say. The term "sorry" obviously would not have been applied to a new stone house. Unless Hager was living outside the bounds of the land he was taking up, he must have been occupying one of the sorry houses.

In 1744 a special warrant to resurvey "Hager's Fancy," in order to include some 307 acres of "vacant" (i.e., unsurveyed) land adjoining thereto was obtained by Hager. In defining the starting point of the resurvey the surveyor who executed this warrant used the same words as were employed in the case of the original survey, namely, beginning at the original beginning tree of the said land "being a bounded white oak standing on the side of a hill within 50 yards of the said Hager's dwelling house."<sup>6</sup>

As sometimes happened in those days, Hager failed to take out a patent for his resurvey on "Hager's Fancy." In 1745 he assigned the certificate of resurvey to Jacob Rohrer (or Rhorer) for the sum of £ 200 (current money) and Rohrer paid the Land Commissioner, Benjamin Tasker, £ 15 7s<sup>7</sup> for the still unpatented 307 acres included in the resurvey.

Attention is called to the fact that his 507 acres cost Rohrer (as far as can be found out) some £ 215 7s, while Hager's original 200 acres cost him £ 44. With due allowance for the difference in acreage, it would appear that Hager had made substantial improvements on his land before he sold it to Rohrer. A stone house would account for the apparent appreciation in value.

In 1740 Jonathan Hager married Elizabeth Kershner, for whom Elizabethtown (Hagerstown) (Elizabeth Town) was named when it was laid out in 1762.<sup>8</sup> It seems likely that a young and enterprising German, who was later to be markedly successful, provided for his bride a decent house to live in.

In a deed from Jonathan Hager to John Rohrer, grandson of Jacob Rohrer (I), dated March 19, 1764, conveying the original 200 acres, "Hager's Fancy," the beginning of the land is described as follows: "at a bounded white oak standing on the side of a hill within fifty yards of the dwelling house standing on the said plantation."<sup>9</sup> The words "within fifty yards" have been retained so that the words which follow read as if an alteration has been made to bring the description up to date. We are undoubtedly dealing with the same site. The consideration was £ 150 Pennsylvania currency. How it came about that Hager could sell this property for hard money to the grandson of the man to whom he had sold it in 1745 remains unexplained.<sup>10</sup> (Had the sum involved been merely nominal, a simple confirmation of title would have been implied.)

The house in question stands at a distance of about 50 yards from the site of the original beginning tree of "Hager's Fancy" and on or near the very spot- at the stipulated 50 yards - most likely to have been chosen by a pioneer on which to build his dwelling house, namely, by or over a never-failing spring.<sup>11</sup> It is hardly likely that this is a mere coincidence.

We are of the opinion that some time between June, 1739, probably about the time of his marriage (1740), and 1745 Hager built the older part of the house now standing and lived there till he sold the land to Rohrer in the latter year. The choice of such a site must have strongly recommended itself to the pioneer settler<sup>12</sup> whose access to water was of vital necessity in case of attack.

Jacob Rohrer died in 1758 in possession of "Hager's Fancy" as resurveyed. He left numerous descendants in Washington County. That he was a man of considerable substance is shown by the inventory<sup>13</sup> of his estate. The house and some of the surrounding land remained in possession of his descendants, Rohrers and Hammonds, until the West End Improvement Company was organized in 1890. From this Company the house was acquired by the Washington County Historical Society, which now owns it.

Although in possession of the Rohrer family and its descendants for more than a century and a half, the house in question seem to have been known in the community as far back as we can trace, as "the Hager House." In view of the long occupancy by the Rohrer family and its branches it is significant that the house retained the Hager<sup>14</sup> name.

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For assistance in this study we are indebted to Dr. Arthur G. Tracey, recognized specialist in land records and the history of Western Maryland, and to Mrs. Frank W. Mish, Jr., who set on foot this investigation and has done invaluable antiquarian work in furtherance of this report.

"James W. Foster"  
"William B. Marye"

In addition to the sources cited above the following printed materials have been consulted:

J. Thomas Scharf, History of Western Maryland (Philadelphia, 1882, p. 1012-1016 and 1059-1060. This is the standard reference on which all later versions seem to have been based. Sketchy and without citation of sources.

Basil Sollers, Jonathan Hager, the Founder of Hagerstown (Second Annual Report, Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland, Baltimore, 1888). Fuller account but contains many undocumented statements.

Thomas J. C. Williams, History of Washington County, Maryland (Hagerstown, 1906), Vol. 1, p. 59-70.

Mary Vernon Mish, Jonathan Hager, Founder (Hagerstown, 1937) 72 pp. This is the first extended study and includes much data not before available though sources are not given in every case.

William Eddis, Letters from America (London, 1792), p. 133-134.

Edward T. Schulz, First Settlements of the Germans in Maryland, (Frederick, Md., 1896) p. 15-16.

Edward S. Delaplaine, Life of Thomas Johnson (New York, 1927). Passing references.

Dieter Cunz, The Maryland Germans, a History (Princeton, 1948) p. 81-86.

"Moravian Diaries of Travels," ed. by W. J. Hinke and C. E. Kemper, in Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (Richmond, 1903) 11:116 and 236. Hager was host to several missionaries in 1748 and 1749.

Julia A. Drake and James R. Orndorff, From Mill Wheel to Plowshare, (Cedar Rapids, Ia., 1938), p. 47-48 and 58-60.

Ralph B. Strassburger and William J. Hinke, Pennsylvania German Picneers. (Norristown, Pa., 1934). Vol. 1:156 and 159. Hager's arrival at Philadelphia in 1736.

Maryland Historical Magazine, Vols. 9, 12, 14: Various references to Hager's military service in the French and Indian war, in which he served as captain, his attendance at meetings of the Committee of Observation in the Revolution and his service in the Maryland legislature.

Ancestral Records and Portraits, A Compilation from the Archives of Chapter I, Colonial Dames of America, (New York, 1910), vol. 2:568-571.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Patented Certificate No. 1013, Prince George's County, Land Office, Annapolis; Patents EI, No. 6, f. 203-4.
2. Warrant Book LG No. A, f. 34.
3. Ibid.
4. Shelby, who died in 1750, was a prominent pioneer and landholder of western Maryland. Resurvey warrant in Liber LG No. D, f. 263; surveyor's certificate, TI No. 1, f. 446; patent, TI No. 3, f. 281.
5. Patented certificate, note 1 above.
6. Patent Records for Land, Liber TI No. 1, f. 446-447.
7. Ibid., f. 447. By 1752 Hager was apparently living on a large tract west of the present city of Hagerstown, which he called "Hager's Delight," for an entry in the Hager Bible records the birth of his daughter, Rosina (or Rosannah) there in that year. This is, however, not a contemporary record, being in the handwriting of Rosina's husband, General Daniel Heister.
8. Memorial tribute to Mrs. Hager written by her husband as a tender expression of his affection in his Bible, published at Nuruberg in 1755, now in the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts. Mrs. Hager died April 16, 1765.
9. Deeds, Liber J, f. 250- , Frederick County, Maryland.
10. Search among the records of both the Land Office and Frederick County has been made without clearing up this mystery.
11. See letter of Mr. J. B. Ferguson, of Hagerstown, to Mrs. Frank W. Mish, Jr., February 18, 1950. Copy in Maryland Historical Society.
12. The period of danger from Indians in this part of the country was not ended till 1756, and occasional raids occurred as late as 1763.
13. Wills, Liber 30, f. 578-8, Hall of Records, Annapolis; Inventories, Liber 68, f. 98-99.
14. See Leonore Hamilton Wilson, "A Day That is Done," in Atlantic Monthly, December, 1929. Also letter of Mrs. F. W. Mish, Jr., July 13, 1950, to the Maryland Historical Society, reading in part: "When I came to Hagerstown . . . 23 years ago there was a handful of delightful old-timers here who . . . were active in civic events -- they had applied themselves to the history of Hagerstown. All were interested in the 'Jonathan Hager House' and had tried to enlist aid for it as a memorial. All of them had known the Lawrence sisters, great-granddaughters of Jonathan Hager. There was never any question in any one's mind but that Hager had built and lived in our stone house."

HABS  
M.D.  
22. HAGTO  
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# NOTES

On the Report of

Mr. James W. Foster and Mr. William B. Marye  
Maryland Historical Society

- 1) Dr. Arthur G. Tracey in commenting upon the problem mentioned in Footnote #10, has assured me that he still regards the Jonathan Hager-John Rohrer land transaction of 1764 as a simple confirmation of title, and has pointed out other contemporary instances of a similarly elastic nature.
- 2) As the West End Improvement Company was a family corporation made up entirely of Rohrers and their descendants, it may be said that this family owned "Hager's Fancy" for 199 years, namely, two centuries.

Mary Vernon Mish

WASHINGTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(The Jonathan Hager House Paper read before the  
Washington County Historical Society by Francis H.  
Jencks, architect, on January 29, 1953. - M.V.M.)

When I returned to the practice of architecture in 1946, one of the first calls we had was from the Washington County Historical Society for the restoration of the Jonathan Hager House. It has been one of the most interesting jobs I have ever worked on, and one of the pleasantest, for it has given me an opportunity to become familiar with Hagerstown, and to work with members of the Society, whose efforts and company have been both helpful and delightful.

The Jonathan Hager House, as you know, is still not restored, but steps are underway to bring back at least part of its original character. And it is in finding out what this original character was that we find a situation both fascinating and baffling.

Let me begin by summarizing the things we know and the things we do not know. First, we know that Jonathan Hager took up a tract of land called "Hager's Fancy", October 16, 1739. (Jonathan Hager's warrant for "Hager's Fancy" - 6/5/1739; survey - 10/16/1739; patent - 12/16/1739.- M.V.M.) This tract consisted of 200 acres. We know that it had on it two sorry houses, location unknown. We know that the surveyor noted on the survey "Beginning at a bounded white oak within 50 yards of the said Hager's dwelling house." We are satisfied by later surveys that this location is, in fact, the location of the present house. We know that Hager paid 44 pounds



for the 200 acres and sold it to Jacob Rohrer in 1745 for 200 pounds. (In 1745 Hager sold 507 acres for £215 7s to Jacob Rohrer. - M.V.M.) The profit of 156 pounds would be accounted for by a stone house. The house was on the present site which does not lend itself to anything but a stone house. There is accordingly strong evidence, evidence hard to discredit, that the house is the Jonathan Hager House.

Let us now examine what we do not know. We do not know whether the house conveyed to Rohrer was one and a half or two and a half stories. We know that the house was once one and a half story and was raised because the stone shows enough difference to make it visible. How long was it between the time Hager moved there and the raising of the roof? The answer is that diligent search has produced no conclusive answer. The date stone which graced the gable almost surely had a date on it, but alas the stone is not to be found. The construction of the roof is unusual. No one would be likely to frame a roof in this manner who understood engineering. But whether it was Hager or a later owner who failed to consult an engineer we do not know. We have every reason to believe it happened before the Revolution, but no mention of the house in either condition has been found.

Let us examine some other things about this house. The bottom floor consists of three rooms, in two of which are springs which join. In the south room there is an enormous fireplace. Neither of the other rooms has a fireplace, and it seems unlikely that they were used for anything but storage. The fireplace is in a stone

wall running from North to South through the building and furnished with a hole which has been thought to be a loophole. I will return to this later.

Let us look at the second story or first floor. We enter a room which may or may not have been divided. On the right is the chimney running up through the house. In the room is another huge fireplace which has just been opened up. It has been blocked off for years with a chair rail of early design running across it. On the other side of the chimney was what seems to have been a larger room which has since been subdivided. This room had a fireplace until recently, but the fireplace seems to be later in date, with an iron piece across the top and is smaller, in the later style. But this fireplace was built into the larger one in the other room and there is every evidence that they could not have been used at the same time. The evidence is that the smaller room had a fireplace and the larger one did not. This seems most remarkable, and the only conclusion seems to be that the larger room was used for stores. There is another possibility that springs to mind, which is that the small part was there first and was then enlarged. Against this we have several arguments which seem to me conclusive. In the first place the outside shows no sign of such addition. In the second place, the chimney wall is not bonded to the other wall. In the third place, the fireplace in the spring-room looks original and would have been out doors.

Whether this baffling problem can ever be solved we don't know. But in any case we know that we have a most interesting house architecturally, that it is unique historically, and that its preservation and restoration present an opportunity and a challenge.

What is being done. What has been done. The house has been examined by Mr. Charles Stotz, who has made an exhaustive study including a book of measured drawings on houses of Western Pennsylvania and has written a report which I have used in my remarks. The house has been examined, and the documents examined by Mr. William Marye, who has written a report also used here. It has been examined by Mr. Foster of the Maryland Historical Society, by Mr. Scarff of the Society for the Preservation of Maryland Antiquities, by Mr. Paul, the President of the Board of the Baltimore Museum of Art, an antiquarian and member of the Walpole Society, an organization primarily interested in American antiquities, by Mr. Burns, Director of Museums, National Park Service, and Mr. Rath, Director of the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings, and Mr. Attwill, President of the ~~Saugus~~ <sup>Saugus</sup> Ironworks Association, ~~Saugus~~ <sup>Saugus</sup>, Massachusetts.

Whatever may be said, no one can say we have not canvassed the field. What do we plan to do. At the moment we plan to restore the roof. The original roof was probably hand split oak shingles, but we believe this is rather risky considering the location. We are using tile which looks like wood, similar to that

used at Williamsburg. We are strengthening the roof to carry this. We are replacing all but two of the frames and all of the sash. Two of the frames seem to be original. The rest appear to have been replaced. None of the sash seems to be original and we are returning to smaller panes which were common at the time.

We plan to pave the cellar with flagstones, but not until the question of sifting the dirt for archaeological findings has been settled. Eventually we hope to restore the site to something like its original look and to restore the interior. In the meanwhile we can restore the old fireplace on the first floor, and leave the rest pending further information. Our present steps will make the house authentic and attractive on the outside. They will permit the exhibiting of the spring and old house, and give us a basis for future improvement.